

SEPTEMBER
1996

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY



And Gladly Teach

PROCESSED

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GTULIBRARY

For Growth in Faith and Mission

Brief Prayers on News Items

Your daily prayer list

What news stories caught your attention? Add them to your prayer list. You might pray for:

- College youth, especially those who deal with rape and racial hate crimes on campus.
- Those elderly who are fleeced of savings through scams.
- People whose lives are affected by election-year debates on welfare and health issues.

Quilts a symbol of hope

When floodwaters damaged homes and displaced members from St. Paul Lutheran Church in St. Maries, Idaho, neighboring congregations helped out by providing quilts. St. Paul's pastor, Dennis Wilson, says the quilts "have become a symbol of hope that not everything was washed away by the muddy water.... Many tears have flowed in thanks as flood victims clutched their quilts."

Thank you, God, for those whose hands lovingly sew quilts.

A 'New Creation'

Reconciliation: the ministry of New Creation Lutheran Church in Orangeburg, S.C. Members take time during worship to listen for guidance from the Holy Spirit. New Creation is the South Carolina Synod's first intentionally multicultural congregation. It is a ministry intended to cross "divisions of race and social class with Christ as the center," says its pastor, Cedric Gibb.

Dismantle our barriers of race and class, O Creator.

Clergy urge peace

Bishop Naim Nassar of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan was among several religious leaders in the Holy Land to demand that Israeli drop plans to confiscate 1750 acres of land from Palestinians in the West Bank. The church officials appealed for an end to the violence.

God of peace and love, bring peace to the troubled Mid-East.

Sonia C. Solomonson is a senior editor for The Lutheran.

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C=community and **G**=growth.

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No doubt about it—questions and faith

What's for Dessert?

Susan Gamelin

I was one of “those kids” in your Sunday school class—you know, the one that has a lot of questions.

I grew up in Minnesota. Minnesota is the home of niceness, Garrison Keillor tells us. I tried to ask my questions as a nice person would, but I could see my teacher flinch when my hand would go up.

It seems that we're born, not with silver spoons in our mouths, but with golden questions.

It took me a while to ask the REALLY BIG QUESTION, but I finally screwed up my courage and hung around after Sunday school to ask it. “Who did Cain marry?” I asked nervously.

My teacher decided that it was time to put me in my place. “It isn’t nice to question God,” she said firmly. I remembered that moment years later when I wept with a mother over the body of her son. “I know I’m

not supposed to question God,” she sobbed angrily.

Not question God? Not question the Bible? Not question, when it seems that we’re born, not with silver spoons in our mouths, but with golden questions?

“Whasat?” my children asked incessantly as they toddled around, pointing with chubby fingers at seagulls and neighbors and garbage trucks and azaleas.

“What’s that?” grows into “Why is that?” as we get older. “Tell Me Why?” we would sing earnestly in two parts under the stars at Camp Tanadoona. As an alto, I loved singing it. As a questioner, I loved singing “Tell Me Why” all the more.

Questions are a part of who we are. Who? What? Why? Where? When? How? We want to know. “Do you take this man to be...,” the pastor asks. “Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth...,” the court wants to know. “Why couldn’t it have been me?” Anna weeps in her

wheelchair when told that her 19-year-old great-grandson has been killed. "When did he leave you?" we ask quietly over coffee that is growing cold. At 2 A.M. the question is red with anger: "Where were you?" Out of our deepest pain we cry, "Why did you...?"

"What's for dessert?" my husband's Uncle Fil would sing out as he walked in the back door every night. "Do you love me?" Tevye yearns to know in *Fiddler on the Roof*. "Will you come and get me?" asks the child on the telephone.

Martin Luther knew that questions are the warp and woof of our lives. And so his Small Catechism is one question after another. "What does this mean?" "How can water produce such great effects?" "Where is this written?" Was it these questions that turned my husband's confirmation day into one unquenchable nosebleed? No, it was the worry about their answers.

Answers. We want them and we don't always get them who-what-when-where-why-how we want them. And so we keep on asking. That is who we are—questioners. "Whasat?" is the cry of our lives. And rightfully so. Heaven and earth are difficult to understand. To ask questions is not to doubt. To ask questions is to begin the search for greater discernment.

The Bible is written for us questioners. It is filled with questions from all directions.

Questions from God. "What is his that you have done?" God roars at Eve in the garden. "Where were

you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" cries the voice in the whirlwind swirling around Job. "Should I not be concerned about Nineveh?" God asks as the curtain goes down on the book of Jonah. "Whom shall I send?" God calls out over a quavering Isaiah.

Questions from us. "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" we cry out in the Psalms.

To ask questions is not to doubt. To ask questions is to begin the search for greater discernment.

From the prophets. Moses' confrontation with the burning bush is one question after another. Moses doesn't hesitate to ask what his inquiring mind wants to know.

From Mary. "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

From Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome. "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

From the disciples. "Lord, to whom can we go?"

From Paul. "Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

From the Pharisees, the chief priests, the scribes, the elders. "Is it lawful for...?"

From Pilate. "Are you the King of the Jews?"

From Jesus. From Jesus, who poses some of the most poignant and powerful questions of all of life. "Why are you afraid? Have you still

no faith?" "Were not 10 made clean? But the other nine, where are they?" "Who do you say that I am?" "Could you not stay awake with me one hour?" "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

"It isn't nice to question God," my Sunday school teacher said ever so firmly ever so many years ago.

I turned away from the church, away from God, when I was told that questions were *verboten*. When God's persistent tug on the sleeve of my soul turned me back, it was with the knowledge that I can face God with my questions. Indeed, the questions we raise can be the most intriguing part of our relationship with God. From our questions God shapes the answers.

"Abba, Abba," the three little

Jewish children kept calling out to their father in the booth across from mine at the pancake house one morning. "Abba, can we have more?" "Abba, what are we going to do next?" "Abba, Abba, do I have to eat it all?"

Like them, let's ask. Let's ask questions of the one whom Jesus Christ called Abba. Let's ask questions about Cain's wife, God's will, and our fears.

And let's have fun asking. Let's ask with all the confidence that Uncle Fil had in receiving a great answer when he would sing out, "What's for dessert?" **G**

The Rev. Susan Gamelin is assistant to the bishop, Southeastern Synod. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband, Timothy.

The teachings of Jesus confront every generation

Pharisees and Sadducees

Donna Hacker Smith

A

wise preacher gears a sermon to the congregation that will hear it. A savvy politician makes speeches that are appealing to his or her constituency. And a good teacher designs a lesson with a specific student or group of students in mind. So with Jesus. He was mindful of those in the class that listened to, and learned from, his parables.

The Gospels frequently mention such religious leaders as the Pharisees and the Sadducees among those who heard

the teaching of Jesus. For example, we read of Pharisees testing Jesus (see Matthew 9:14), inviting Jesus to dinner (see Luke 7:36), and engaging in deep discussions of faith with him (see John 3:1). Since the Sadducees and the Pharisees—the religious leaders of their day—are so often present and involved in some way in Jesus' teaching and ministry, we need to know a bit about who they are.

The Pharisees were a scholarly class dedicated to the teaching and observance of the written and oral law. The word *pharisee* derives from a Hebrew word meaning "separate." The Pharisees saw their practices as separating them from heathen and impure practices. Their practices were geared toward moving religious activity into the everyday lives of ordinary Jewish people, and away from being centered in the Temple among the more elite priestly class. The Pharisees developed the synagogue as a place for scripture reading, prayer, and support. They also taught and believed in the resurrection of the dead. It is acknowledged that the teachings of the Pharisees are foundational for much of modern Judaism.

The Sadducees were opponents of the Pharisees. The Sadducees derived their name from Zadok, the father of the Jerusalem priesthood (see 2 Samuel 8:17). The Sadducees were highly concerned with priestly authority and Temple practice. They were devoted to the understanding of Judaism as a political/national entity, and are more identified with the wealthier classes of Jews in Jesus' day. They did not support a belief in an afterlife or resurrection. Understandably, because of their strong identification and interest in the Temple and its ritual practices, their influence diminished greatly after the Temple fell to the Romans in the year 70.

The writers of the Gospels were mindful of their own context as they wrote of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and their interactions with Jesus. Mark, writing in an era of conflict between newer Gentile Christians and conservative Christians who kept Jewish practices, always describes the Pharisees and Sadducees in conflict with Jesus and his disciples. Matthew wrote at a time when emerging Jewish practice was distancing itself from the fledgling Christian church, and his negative view of these leaders illustrates this estrangement.



The Pharisees
were a scholarly
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and oral law.

Luke's writings give us a different picture. With a more positive view of the Pharisees, he sees the Sadducees as the enemies of Christianity, particularly because of their disbelief in the possibility of a resurrection. In John, the last of the Gospels to be completed, the Pharisees are mentioned separately and also in the grouping of

Jesus' enemies known simply as "the Jews." (John does not mention Sadducees.) It is clear that by the time John wrote, he saw no hope of reconciliation between the Christian and Jewish communities.

Why should we modern-day Christian readers of the parables and listeners to the teachings of Jesus be concerned with the images of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

First, an unfairly negative view of these groups—both in past history and currently—contributes to anti-Judaism in our own day. Such is contrary to the spirit and practice of our faith.

Second, to see the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day in only a negative light is to deny a portion of our own faith heritage. The teachings of the Pharisees, in particular their sup-

port of the doctrine of resurrection and eternal life, paved the way for acceptance of the resurrection of Christ by the first witnesses. Paul himself was trained as a Pharisee. Understanding these groups better will deepen our appreciation of our own faith.

Finally, to see the Pharisees and Sadducees strictly as the enemies of Jesus allows us to distance ourselves from the teachings that challenged them—and that still challenge us. This is like assuming that the Sunday sermon is directed at others in the congregation, but not at me! The timeless teachings of Jesus confront every person and generation with equal power. We must let go of any attitude or prejudice that would prevent us from truly hearing his precious words! **G**

Donna Hacker Smith is pastor of St. James Lutheran in rural Forreston, Illinois. She serves on the boards of the ELCA Division for Ministry and Gettysburg Seminary.

Teacher Tributes

Martha was my eighth-grade Sunday school teacher. Her life was not easy. Widowed at a young age, she raised a daughter alone on what she earned as a cleaning lady. She lived in a two-room apartment. She walked wherever she went, as she did not own a car.

Because our church was at the top of a hill, Martha's walk to church each Sunday was always an uphill climb. It was not easy walking, especially in the snow and ice of a Minnesota winter.

Since our church did not have Sunday school rooms at that time, all classes met in the church sanctuary, sitting in pews with an empty pew between each class. The noise was sometimes unbearable, but not to Martha, even though she wore a hearing aid. In spite of the noise, she was tuned into us—our questions, our doubts, our fears—and she responded with care and compassion.

When I hear people give excuses for not teaching Sunday school, I think of Martha and the excuses she could have used—her age, poor hearing, no car—but Martha never used them. Her commitment to God was above excuses.

We eighth-graders learned a lot about the Bible from Martha, but more than that, we learned the meaning of commitment, the importance of worship, and the joy of serving the Lord!

Thank God for Martha Finnerud!

*Barbara L. Daiker
Carroll, Iowa*

Louise never meant to teach me anything, but in the very way she lived, she taught me, and she taught me the essentials. Louise is difficult to describe in an age when people are defined by what they do. She is not a career woman nor an activist nor a person of great importance by most worldly standards. She raised eight children by herself and, in all the time I knew her, she was desperately poor. Today, she is almost 80 years old and is confined to a wheelchair.

During my teenage years, Louise sent me an inspirational message every week. Sometimes it was a poem or a quote or a prayer or a crocheted heart. When I sponsored a boy in Africa, she sent me stamps so I could write to him. Always, the messages included her signature and the sign of a cross drawn in felt-tip marker. Louise belonged to the cross, and her messages continually brought me back to God. She always sent the right message at the perfect time.

Louise is a modern contemplative who keeps a finger to the spiritual pulses of numerous people and responds with small acts of caring. These ordinary acts of love combine to create an extraordinary life and witness. While I still have the chance, I want to say "thank you, Louise."

*Kristin Steinmetz
Snohomish, Washington*

I have cerebral palsy; this has caused me to be delayed in almost every area of my life. I didn't walk until I was eight years old. In our church the children all started Sunday school at the age of three. However, my parents didn't take me because of my physical problems. The nursery-class teacher, Barbara Thomas, felt that I should go to Sunday school like the other children. She told Mother to bring me, even though I needed special attention.

My parents tell me of my first Sunday school Christmas program. Barbara assumed that, like all the other children, I would take part in the program. Since I couldn't stand, she sat me on a chair on the stage knowing I would be perfectly fine. Well, that morning Mother made the mistake of putting a new pair of slick tights on me and I kept sliding off the chair. Barbara took this in stride.

I truly believe that if Barbara hadn't pushed to get me started in Sunday school, I might never have gone at all. I know that all the things Barbara did for me helped build my foundation of faith. Because she gave so much of herself, Barbara will always be a special person to me.

*Clara Willmann
Hartford City, Indiana*

Brownie the bear came to visit me the other day. He was sent by a fourth-grade student in Guyton, Georgia. So far, Brownie has "traveled" to cities in Georgia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Michigan.

Brownie was sent to me by my niece, Jaime. Jaime teaches me much. At age 13 she is a creative artist. She teaches me to be "splashy" in my walk with Jesus, adding color and joy to people's lives. Jaime is adventuresome; she teaches me to embrace life with zest and strike out in new patterns. She teaches me to spread encouragement and support to others. Jaime has attended many

worship services with me, teaching me the value of seeing worship through a child's eyes.

Monday I will pack up Brownie and send him on to Detroit. However, his brief stay has taught me a lot as I have reflected on how one is taught and who is the teacher. The prophet Isaiah reminds us that "a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6). May we, as grown-ups, be open to being led by our children.

*Cynthia E. Cowen
Iron Mountain, Michigan*

She always wore a comb in her prematurely gray hair. As one of eight little 10-year-old girls in her Sunday school class, I tried to imitate her when playing school by borrowing a comb from my mother. "It will take more than a comb in your hair to be like Mrs. Field," Mother would comment.

Mrs. Field taught, by example, the joys of learning, of loving, of being loved, and of living life at its best. I have forgotten much of the specific subject matter of her lessons, but I will never forget Mrs. Field's beautiful example of sincerity, love, and integrity. Even today, when it is gray (but not prematurely) I like to wear a comb in my hair.

*Alice L. Swygert
Decatur, Georgia*

I love Mr. Mears! I miss him so much!" my classmates and I can be heard reminiscing wistfully about our eighth-grade Sunday forum teacher. We're freshmen in high school now, but we still visit Mr. Mears before and after class, envious of the students who "get him" this year. He won us over by providing a safe place for us to debate and question, and showed us that every part of our lives and every issue we raised had something to do with religion. The atmosphere was open and so much safer than school; even the boys in the class put aside their paper airplanes and participated in the discussion.

My class, always tightly knit because we were kind of the "odd class out," became closer than ever in the haven of forum every Sunday. Congregation members who had formerly despaired of us are now overhead commenting on what a fine class we are, and how proud we make them. We are proud, too.

After confirmation most of us continue going to church, and six of us are now teaching Sunday school ourselves. I teach fourth grade with my classmate, Katherine. We are trying to help "our kids" love the church as much as Mr. Mears helped us love it. Mr. Mears turned church into a place where we really want to be.

*Anne Edison-Swift
Park Ridge, Illinois*

For information on how you can participate in Reader Calls, see page 45.

What's **New** in **Christian Education?**

Carol Burk



Studies show that being involved in a congregation's Christian education program is the second most important influence on a person's faith development. Christian education is second only to faith conversations with one's mother for promoting growth in maturity of faith. A mature faith is characterized by a "deep, personal relationship to a loving God and a consistent devotion to serving others."¹

For many years Sunday school has been the cornerstone for Christian education. Most churches still consider Sunday school to be their primary form of Christian education. Let's look at some new trends evolving in Christian education.

Godly Play

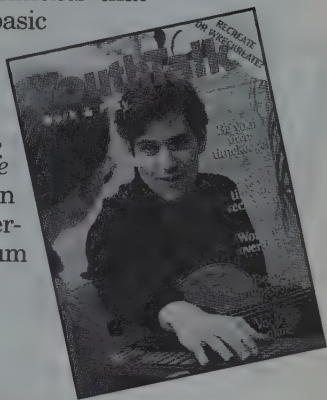
A new, significant movement is taking hold in many parts of the ELCA. At the heart of this movement is a learning theory known as "godly play." This Bible-story-based approach to learning stems from the Montessori method of teaching and was originally developed by Jerome Berryman, an Episcopal priest.² In a godly play classroom, the lesson follows the flow of worship, with time for entry into the story, hearing the story, responding to the story, and sharing a meal.

Many aspects of this theory are found in the Augsburg Fortress curriculum series *Good News Explorers*. This exciting new curriculum is child-centered, teacher-friendly, and focuses on active learning—a style of learning that involves all of the senses. Learner materials are unique for each age level and offer new and different approaches to learning that teachers will find stimulating and valuable.

The Bible foundations for *Good News Explorers* provide an

overview of the salvation story in two 15-session terms per year, on a two-year rotation. For Sunday schools that operate on a longer schedule there are Lutheran enrichments that incorporate catechetical instruction into the basic Sunday school program.

Augsburg Fortress also provides a traditional approach to Sunday school by continuing to offer two other strong curriculum resource series, *Rejoice and Witness*. The *Lutheran Faith and Life* series presents Lutheran heritage to both children and adults. There are a number of excellent offerings for youth, such as *YouthTalk*, a curriculum designed to look and read like a magazine.



What about Adults?

"Lifelong learning" is a term that has been circulating among Lutherans for many years. The need for a special focus on adult learning has never been more critical. The Baby Boomers and Generation X are searching for a closer relationship with God and a way to find meaning in life through their Christian faith. The church needs leadership rooted in the faith of the Christian church. Many adults are coming to the church as new Christians, or as former church drop-outs. They need to hear God's Word and to grow into a mature faith. Many adults neither have attended Sunday school, nor had conversations with their parents about the faith.

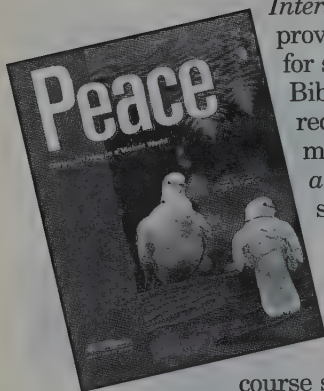
Beginning now, and picking up speed in 1997, is an emphasis in the ELCA on adult education. Many new adult resources are being developed to help persons grow in faith. The

10 Ways To Be an Advocate for Christian Education and Evangelism

1. Talk to your pastor. Get her or him excited about Christian education for all ages.
2. Attend a Sunday school class (or start one, if none is available).
3. Teach a Sunday school class.
4. Start a Christian reading group.
5. Bring a friend to an adult class.
6. Call your synod to make contact with a specialist in Christian education.
7. Attend a Christian education and/or evangelism event in your area.
8. Attend the ELCA's domestic mission event, "Reach and Serve: Congregations for the 21st Century," in Los Angeles, California, November 8-10, 1996. Call Carmen Rabell-Freire, at (800) 638-3522, ext. 2562.
9. Support Christian education in prayer.
10. Encourage participants of your Women of the ELCA group to reach, teach, and serve to support Christian education and evangelism efforts in your congregation and beyond.

small-group movement is getting stronger. Four out of every 10 people in America belong to some kind of small group.

Intersections, a 12-book series for use by small groups, provides timely topics and a strong biblical foundation for small groups in the congregation. Topics range from Bible studies that connect faith and life, to support and recovery resources that help you reach out to your community. The series guide, *Starting Small Groups—and Keeping Them Going*, provides excellent help for starting and maintaining successful small groups.



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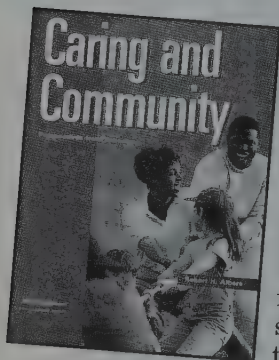
or adults who want Bible study, one new resource is available and another is in the works. *Bible Basics*, a four-

course series, provides basic information about the Bible in a learner-friendly way. The series is aimed at adults who are new to the Bible, or at those who feel their Bible study skills could use a boost. Each course is six sessions long.

The titles are *Ten Key Passages in the Bible*, *Ten Key Events in the Bible*, *Ten Key People in the Bible*, and *Ten Key Events in Jesus' Life*.

For adults who have some familiarity with the Bible, a new growth/challenge Bible study is being prepared. This 12-unit series, called the *Inspire Bible Study*, will get adults more deeply into Bible study. The series will offer six Old Testament and six New Testament courses. A key feature of this new Bible study is its attention to adult learning styles. The focus will be on the learner, not the teacher. The first six courses will be available in March 1997.

For new adult Bible study materials from Women of the ELCA on its 1997 Exodus study, see pp. 45-46 in this issue.



Linking Christian Education and Evangelism

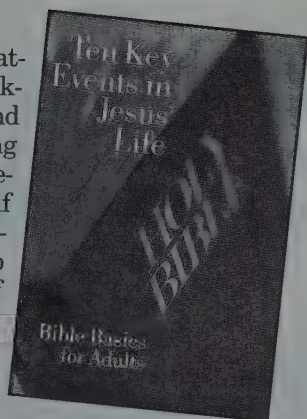
One of the most exciting things happening in the ELCA today is the linking of education and evangelism. We do not educate members simply to maintain the church as it is. We teach to reach. Christian education needs to have an outward focus. We *teach* God's story so that we can *tell* God's story. When we have good news to share, we cannot keep silent. Right outside your door are people who have never heard about God's saving grace through Jesus Christ.

Learn and tell it!

Anyone can look through the Augsburg Fortress catalog or browse through the local Christian bookstore and find resources. But we need to go beyond resources and become advocates for quality lifelong Christian education. Become a proponent of lifelong learning in your congregation. Keep yourself informed about the Christian education opportunities in your congregation, area, and synod. If no opportunities exist, find ways to create them. If you need help, call a member of the ELCA's Education and Evangelism Team in the Division for Congregational Ministries at the churchwide offices in Chicago at (800) 638-3522. We'll be glad to talk with you. **G**



Sister Carol Burk is a member of the ELCA Deaconess Community. She serves as associate director for adult education in the ELCA's Division for Congregational Ministries and is part of the Education and Evangelism Team (E-Team).



New Adult Resources from Augsburg Fortress

(To order, or for more information, call 1-800-328-4648.)

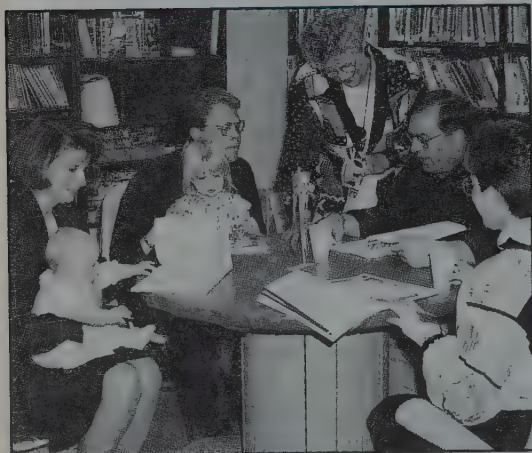
Bible Basics: A series for adults new to the Bible or those who just want to brush up on the basics. The four courses are titled *Ten Key Passages in the Bible*, *Ten Key People in the Bible*, *Ten Key Events in the Bible*, and *Ten Key Events in Jesus' Life*.

Coming in March 1997: *Inspire Bible Study* series, a new growth/challenge adult Bible study. Each six-session course deals with a section or book of Scripture. Six Old Testament and six New Testament courses are being prepared in this series.

1. Search Institute, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations*, March 1990.
2. See the book *Godly Play*, by Jerome Berryman, Augsburg Fortress, 1995.

The Ministry of Resource Centers

Julie K. Aageson



Church staff members plan a retreat at a resource center.

"I thank my God every time I remember you . . . because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3, 5).

Paul's prayer for the Philippian congregation echoes a basic belief of resource-center ministry: God's people are the heart of the church. The resource center is a partner with congregations as the work of the church is done week in and week out—at the table and the font, from the pulpit and in the classroom, among the youth and the elderly, and during all the stages in between.

The theme for this issue of LWT—"And Gladly Teach"—could also be the theme for the work of ELCA resource centers. The teaching opportunities are many. Listen to some requests and comments from parishioners:

▲ "During Lent, we are focusing on communion, and the entire parish is in conversation about what this sacrament means. Would the resource center have some materials that would help us shape our study?"

▲ "Our junior-high forum is studying and learning about justification by faith. Would there be a short video or story that might illustrate Romans 5?"

▲ "Our congregation wrote a service for the presentation of Bibles. We're sending a copy to the resource center to be shared."

▲ "We need a litany and/or an opening devotion on diversity for our women's group."

▲ "A woman in my congregation is interested in learning more

about the book of Daniel; could you help us find a Bible study or reference books?"

▲ "Can we preview samples of Sunday school and confirmation curricula in the resource center?"

▲ "Our women's group would like to learn more about the healing stories of Jesus."

▲ "We're teaching the Passover story to our primary grades. Could you recommend some good story books?"

▲ "Are there resources that could help couples and families deal with the trauma of divorce? Have other congregations shared services of healing?"

▲ "We want to help youth and adults deal with the subject of suicide."

Whether the request is for an idea for a nominating process or a first-communion class, a new book about multiple-staff ministry or the historical Jesus, a video series on the healing stories of the New Testament or a dramatic reenactment of the prodigal son story, the resource center serves and is served by congregations.

Parishes are regularly invited to share ideas and resources they've developed. They're asked to nominate people whose gifts might be needed in another congregation. "Open Files" contain ideas for including children in worship, ways to evaluate preaching, collections of questions for call committees, congregational booklets to introduce basic Bible facts or help members facing death, as well as worship and education ideas for all the seasons of the church year.

On a day-to-day basis, the resource center provides an inviting place for browsing, previewing materials, and sharing conversation. There are collections of books by well-known



Mary Stoltz, Joan Peery, Catherine Fink, and Julie Ageson are members of the new Association of Lutheran Resource Centers Steering Committee.

There are some 90 resource centers located across the ELCA. For information about the center nearest you, call the ELCA Resource Information Service (RIS) at (800) 638-3522.

authors; resources on storytelling, prayer, worship, and preaching; displays of periodicals and videos; exhibits of art; and spaces for viewing and for study.

As important as the welcoming space, and the enticing resources of a center, is the communication link that resource

On a day-to-day basis, the resource center provides an inviting place for browsing, previewing materials, and sharing conversation.

centers provide. Connecting people to one another, helping congregations find appropriate curriculum, recommending new materials, providing preview resources, bringing biblical scholars and other persons of faith into the parish via video, and reviewing books—all these services help

link congregations and people to each other, and to the larger church.

The Lenten canticle, "Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love," echoes down through the centuries, reminding us who we are and to whom we belong. Resource-center ministry is a First-Commandment ministry: As we "re-source" together, we return again and again to the source of our life and hope, to the God who nourishes and sustains us as God's people, the God made known to us in Jesus Christ. While we have many sources in our parishes and in our collections, it is to *this* Source that we continually return to be "re-Sourced," a lifelong process.

Gertrud Mueller Nelson tells a family story in her book *To Dance with God*: Her young daughter made a banner from old sewing scraps. "I'm making a banner for a procession," she said. "I need a procession so that God will come down and dance with us."

Resource-center ministry is about such encounters—finding the resources that nurture, nourish, and sustain us as the people of God. Resource-center ministry is about the creative redemptive work of a God who chooses us as dancing partners.

Best of all, the resource center is a crossroads for learning from one another. As ideas are exchanged, good books recommended and collected, audio and video resources shared, the entire church is nourished and enriched. Resource centers are one means of serving, supporting, and undergirding our congregations as they proclaim God's good news. In that spirit, resource centers reflect the calling of the church to "gladly teach." **G**

Julie K. Ageson is director of the resource center for the Eastern North Dakota Synod in Fargo, and is a writer and consultant for church-related resources. She is a member of Bethesda Lutheran in Moorhead, Minnesota.

From **Age to Age:** Whole-life Learning

Barbara Wilson
Charles Wilson

A

n 11-year-old from the United States, hefting a backpack, walks wide-eyed through a Chinese train station. An 80-something couple makes space in their "efficient" kitchen cupboard for a small set of new everyday dishes. A six-month-old flaps arms and legs excitedly as the family dog brushes by. And a 49-year-old starts a journal on a laptop computer.

Whole-life learning is a name for a radical openness to experience, possible for people of any age.

Which of these are lifelong learners? They all are, of course, in the best understanding of the term. And so are you. "Lifelong learning" is a buzzword in any discussion of Christian education these days. But the "long" suggests a time span, a duration that may miss the point of the uniquely human drive to learn. "Whole-life learning" may be a better name for a radical openness to experience, possible for people of any age.

Books certainly contribute to whole-life learning. Think about the toddler's board book with the chewed corners, the confirmand's highlighted Bible, the young adult's regularly reread novel, and the elder-hostel enthusiast's tour books. All of them snap synapses that ripple across our brain cells, connecting our ideas and keeping us turning pages.

But books are not the whole story. An inspirational audiotape, a conversation over a card game, a Sunday school class of lively third-graders, and a thresher's rhythmic litany of thanks for rows to harvest—each can shape a moment or a month of whole-life learning.

Calvin, the forever-five-year-old cartoon character, kneels over a tiny stream of water in a pile of dirt. "I'd say our afternoon just got booked solid," he cheerfully informs Hobbes, his tiger alter ego.

Out of such small commitments to investigate come great examples of whole-life learning. Read Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (HarperCollins, 1988) for Calvin's afternoon expanded into a reflective adult's whole booked-solid life. Greatness like theirs may be what Jesus had in mind when he put the child among the disciples (see Matthew 18:1-5).

The little we know of Jesus' growing up (see Luke 2:41-52) identifies him as a whole-life learner at age 12. He is so absorbed with what there is to learn in the temple that he apparently loses track of time, as well as his family. And who would not agree that his 33 years as learner and teacher counts as a whole life's worth?

Are you, or have you been, engaged in learning experiences that take you by the hand and remake you? Two years ago our family traveled in Asia for five months with 21 college students. That 11-year-old in the Chinese train station was our son Peter. He and 13-year-old Gregor kept gleeful pace with their sister Jessica, and the 20 other St. Olaf students as we climbed, swam, studied, flew, meditated, and floated through Indonesia, Hong Kong, Thailand, and China. The boys' memories energize and haunt them as they watch the nightly news—and plan the next trip.



Gregor and Peter Wilson on the Great Wall of China.

Our group adventures will appear in essays and artwork, frame arguments and careers for all 23 of the "Term in Asia" kids. Living in a radically different environment is a gift few people have a chance to enjoy. And yet, many

accomplished whole-life learners have never ventured more than 100 miles from home.

Whole-life learning may be concrete or abstract, active or reflective, despairing or ecstatic, isolated or communal, fleeting or intense. It might stop you short or kick you into next year. At this point you may be wondering, "What *isn't* whole-life learning?" What it is—and isn't—depends on the learner.

So how do you measure up as a whole-life learner? Consider these questions: Do you put yourself into situations that make learning delightfully inevitable? Are you someone who sees possibilities in the out-of-the-ordinary, makes time to wonder, and actually listens to answers to your questions?

Or do you need a little stretching or loosening into your whole life? Then begin by discovering and indulging in your preferred learning style. Look, if you are a visual learner; listen, if hearing is your thing. Touch, taste, and smell to encounter the fresh and recall the familiar. Consider that your preferences are likely to change as you age. After all, babies check out much of what's around them by putting things in their mouths! Once you know how you are most comfortable learning, try some of these whole-life learning options:

■ **Each year on the anniversary** of your birth or baptism, record a passage from Scripture that has been particularly meaningful to you. Keep the list of texts taped inside the cover of your Bible.

■ **Spend a day with someone** half your age or twice your age. Find out what hurts and what nurtures that person. Plan ways you can support and challenge one another.

■ **Study the fractions of your life.** Do "the essential thirds" in your life—rest, experience, and response—add up to a satisfying whole? Which is lacking and how can you reestablish balance?

■ **Resurrect a relationship.** Everyone has a fence to mend. Invite a "long lost" to become a "beloved found."

■ **Sit back and listen** to a discussion around the coffee table or the sandbox. Pray about what you hear, and respond with caring action.

■ **Add a new item** to your daily routine: a serving dish, a globe, a family devotions calendar.

■ **Experiment with a new tool:** a camera, a study Bible, a computer, a musical instrument.

■ **Trek your own path** through some Psalms. Practice resting in, experiencing with, and responding to each psalmist's voice as it calls to you.

■ **Be realistic.** Whole grains offer a richness our bodies need; whole milk may be too much. When the whole experience of life—its violence and disappointments along with divine grace and surprising love—are overwhelming, accept the gift of God's peace and whisper your own wholly spirited "Amen." 6



Jessica Wilson with public school kids in Sumatra, Indonesia.

Barbara Olson Wilson and Charles Wilson live in Northfield, Minnesota, where Charles teaches religion at St. Olaf College. Barbara is a preschool curricular editor for Augsburg Fortress Publishers. They have three children: Jessica, Peter, and Gregor.

Remembering Barbara Nelson

Adeline Bernhardson
Jewell Nelson

Barbara's ready smile, her forthrightness, and her ability to express her convictions were qualities we discovered as we worked together on the Board of Directors for Lutheran Church Women in the early '80s. We learned, too, of her thoughtfulness as a friend and a confidant.

Two weeks after graduating from Bethany College in Lindsborg, Kansas, Barbara was married to Eugene K. Nelson, a candidate for the Lutheran ministry. Immediately she "plunged" into parish life and work: singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, working with youth, and participating in women's work, wherever her husband served—Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska, California, and Kansas.

Barbara was very active in Lutheran Church Women in her district and synod, and on the national board of directors, where she was secretary and, later, vice president. At decision-making time, her comment was always, "But now, is it theologically correct?"

As a member of the "Committee of 70" that drew up the framework for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Central States Synod Professional Leadership Committee that examined candidates for the



ministry, and the Executive Council of Church Women United, Barbara filled her later years with the ministry of the church.

Her family was her primary concern. An inspirational speaker, she addressed many a Mother-Daughter banquet. She also served as general chair for a Global Mission Event at Bethany College.

Barbara Nelson died on May 20, 1994. Her funeral service was indeed a celebration of her life as her children and grandchildren participated in word and song.

"For all the saints
who from their labors rest,
All who by faith
before the world confessed,
Your name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!"

(Lutheran Book of Worship 174)

—Adeline Bernhardson
Fargo, North Dakota

—Jewell Nelson
Moorhead, Minnesota

Bonnie Jensen

A Global Vision

Karen Titus



On one hand, the Rev. Bonnie L. Jensen broke new ground when she became executive director of the ELCA's Division for Global Mission (DGM) in December 1995. Few women have held executive directorships within the ELCA; and DGM, which oversees missionaries and volunteers in more than 50 countries, represents the church's largest division.

On the other hand, as Jensen herself is quick to point out, the partnership between women and missions has been a long one. Women's missionary organizations have a rich history in the church, sending the first female missionaries overseas and providing some of the church's earliest female leaders.

"Women have never lost their interest in the missionary call," says Jensen. "It's been a critical issue for women globally, whether it be with grass-roots development projects or food production or children's health." Jensen hopes to solidify that commitment as she helps steer DGM toward the next century. While the division's goals will dovetail with the ELCA's mission as the next millennium approaches, she says, two areas of concern will likely remain

paramount: working with established churches to develop leaders and provide theological education, and expanding the ELCA's reach in other parts of the globe, such as Senegal and Bangladesh.

Jensen draws on her missionary background. She and her husband, Richard, served as missionaries in Ethiopia from 1962 to 1965.

Recalls Jensen: "It was just a wonderful experience." Reentry into U.S. society was a bit harder, however. "It's difficult to come home and be confronted with the consumerism, materialism, and fast pace of our culture, to step back into that perspective."

Developing new perspectives is critical both for DGM and the church as a whole, especially when it comes to the role of women. "The global challenge and vision of being Christian women is something that can draw us all together and capture our imaginations," she says. "So much of our work involves social, economic, and health issues, and women are the key to that. Every woman in the church needs to understand that and have a global vision of Christ's community."

Karen Titus, Chicago, Illinois, is a freelance writer.

Lifelong Learner Gladys Arntzen

Marcia Bates



It's easy to tell that 101-year-old Gladys Arntzen is committed to lifelong learning. Just check her current subscription to *Lutheran Woman Today*.

This stylish centenarian makes a 30-minute bus trip from her apartment in downtown Seattle to worship and circle meetings at Grace Lutheran Church in nearby Bellevue, Washington. She hosts members of her circle at her apartment every year.

Gladys's love of learning began in the tiny town of Dockton on Vashon Island near Seattle. There her father, Peter Manson, founded the Manson Construction and Engineering Company, a ship construction company that still operates in Seattle.

Gladys attended an ecumenical Sunday school taught by a woman who helped run a local boarding house for dock workers. Worship was sometimes led by a college student who stopped in Dockton after leading services in nearby Burton.

After graduating from Dockton's one-room schoolhouse in 1910, Gladys and her four ninth-grade classmates began attending Burton High School. When her family moved to Seattle with their busi-

ness, Gladys finished high school there and then attended the University of Washington, where she majored in public school music. She helped others discover the joy of learning by teaching school and giving piano lessons.

Gladys has been a member of Grace Lutheran since 1955, providing quiet support and special financial assistance, particularly in the areas of education, worship, and music.

Gladys still plays the piano and, until just a few years ago, sang in a local Scandinavian chorus. She continues to support Seattle's opera and ballet companies and a civic organization assisting those living in poverty.

Her happy 41-year marriage to Andrew J. Haug produced three children—Irving, Peter, and Andrea. After Andrew's death in 1965, Gladys married a family friend, Edward J. Arntzen, who died in 1971.

Grace Lutheran Church and its Women of the ELCA are grateful for Gladys's many years of faithful participation. Her vitality and passion for learning continue to inspire them.

Marcia Bates and her husband, the Rev. Kevin Bates, live in Everett, Washington.

Christians Engaging the World

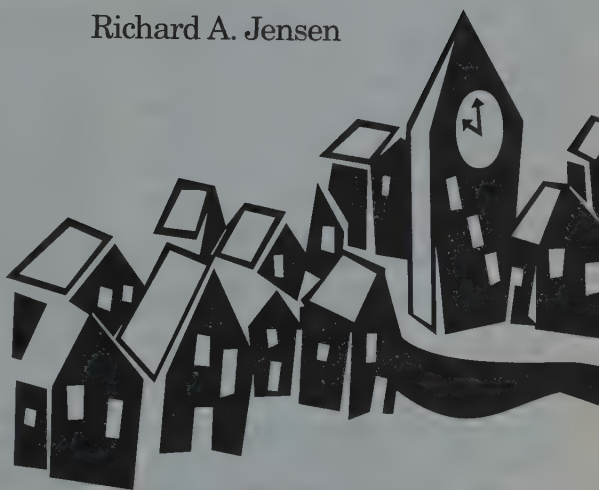
Richard A. Jensen

■ Jenny Hughes and Gwen Swenson are mothers deeply concerned about their school system. They don't like what is happening to their children in the local elementary school. They had initial talks with some teachers, the principal, and even some school board members about the things that bothered them. They were at their wits end.

What to do? Jenny was absolutely convinced that the only solution to the school problem was for the churches in town to band together and build their own Christian school. But Gwen couldn't buy Jenny's solution. She continued to believe that the school officials were people of goodwill who would work with them to improve the schools.

■ "How can you possibly vote for him?" Dorothy Schmidt asked in disbelief. "I'm not sure he's even a Christian! How could we ever expect him to uphold Christian ideals and principles once he is elected?" Conchita Gonzalez disagreed. "I think he is a very good candidate. He knows the needs of our community well. He's a bright young man who is really concerned with people and their needs. Isn't that a kind of Christian attitude, whether or not he belongs to one of our churches?"

Actually Jenny, Gwen, Dorothy, and Conchita are all engaged in fairly typical debates about the role of Christians in our culture. This debate has been going on among Christians since the early church. Through the ages, Christian people have read the Bible in different ways when it comes to the matter of how Christians and



Christian people have read the Bible in different ways when it comes to the matter of how Christians and the church should relate to their surrounding culture.

the church should relate to their surrounding culture. In 1951, H. Richard Niebuhr wrote a book titled *Christ and Culture*, which spelled out the ways in which Christians have engaged their surrounding culture through the centuries. Niebuhr offers five overarching categories:

1. Christ against culture.

Christians of this persuasion have always seen Christ and culture to be at great odds with each other. Christians are either to escape (head for a monastery, for example) or work against the culture in which they live.

2. Christ of culture.

Those who hold this view see Jesus as the Messiah of their society, the fulfiller of their hopes and aspirations, the perfecter of their true faith, and the source of their holiest spirit. Jesus isn't set against human cultures. Jesus fulfills the dreams and aspirations of all human cultures.

3. Christ above culture.

This impulse was most clearly expressed through the many centuries in the Western world when the papacy sought to have authority over all human political arrangements. All human culture is to be subservient to the power of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church."

4. Christ the transformer of culture. Culture does not need to be opposed or replaced by a new creation. Culture needs to be *transformed or converted* in order that it

might be a "Christian culture." This is a view espoused by the great reformer John Calvin and clearly advocated by many Christians in the United States today. We can transform our schools and our societies so that they are Christian schools and we are a Christian society.

5. Christ and culture in paradox. This was Niebuhr's term for the complex understanding of this subject by Martin Luther.

Luther believed that **God works in the world in two different ways.** (This view is sometimes called the "two kingdoms.") First, God works in the world as creator of all people. St. Paul concludes from this creative reality that the law of God is written on the hearts of all people (see Romans 2:15). All God's created people, therefore, know the law, have a conscience, and are endowed with reason with which to carry out the heart-written law. In other words, **God is at work in culture before any of our Christian attempts to work with it.** Luther concluded that the basic structures of society (the political, educational, and familial) can be created by all persons of reason and goodwill.

God's second way of working in the world, according to Luther, is God's work of salvation brought through Jesus Christ. This work of God is necessary

because human beings are sinful to the core and do not live out the law that is heart-written. Human beings *know* the law written on their heart but they cannot *keep* this law. Only God in Jesus Christ can save us from our own willful self-destruction.

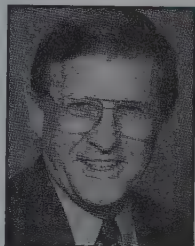
What do redeemed sinners do in relation to society? Fight against it? Identify with it? Rule it? Transform it? Luther's teaching was none of these. He taught that as baptized Christians we were called to serve our neighbor as wives, brothers, daughters, grand-daughters, workers, and citizens. These are our vocations. These are the concrete places where we live out our love of neighbor. This is the meaning of "the priesthood of all believers." We are called upon to love the neighbor given to us through family, work, neighborhood, and nation.

God's two ways of working in the world, therefore, come together in the one life of the believer. We are saved by God's work of salvation so that we might join God as transformed co-workers in God's work of creation. In God's creation we can normally work with all persons of reason and good will for the good of our human society and culture. There may be times, however, when we may feel that the culture is so hostile to Christian values that we must go it alone as the church making a difference in God's world.

In our opening stories Gwen Swenson and Conchita Gonzalez understood themselves as transformed co-workers. God, the creator, is at work in all human culture. We

are called upon to join God and God's creatures in making this world a better place for all of God's people. **AC**

Dr. Richard A. Jensen is director of joint planning for the cooperative work of Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Wartburg Theological Seminary. His latest book is Preaching Mark's Story: A Narrative Approach.



Martin Luther, the Teacher

Faith L. Fretheim

As Lutherans, we proudly take our name from Martin Luther. We credit him for church reform, for creating the "I-can-approach-God-myself" religion. Here's another attribute to consider: Martin Luther could be called the father of literacy.

At the beginning of the 15th century, when Europe was emerging from the Dark Ages, books were scarce. Scribes—often monks—laboriously wrote out each book by hand. Books were expensive and mostly written in Latin. This made books

We credit Martin Luther for church reform, for creating the “I-can-approach-God-myself” religion.

accessible only to the rich and well educated.

Justification by individual faith, not by priestly mediation to God, is one of Luther's most important teachings. What if that insight had not gotten through to the masses? What if no one except those in the church hierarchy had been able to read?

The printing press and Martin Luther appeared about the same time. Here's what David Hartman, a professor of education at Columbia's Teachers' College and former director of the Israel National Literacy Program, wrote in *Illiteracy: A National Dilemma*:

“Perhaps the most significant short text printed and widely circulated was Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. Luther nailed the original to a church door in the small German town of Wittenberg in 1517, thereby launching the Reformation. Uncirculated, the Ninety-Five Theses would probably have been regarded merely as a challenge to the Roman Catholic church—which,

indeed, they were—and dealt with internally. Widely circulated, they rapidly became much more, bringing a new, parallel, Christian dogma into being.”*

Martin Luther and other church reformers who believed in justification by individual faith urged the printing of books for all people and reading for all. How else could a believer have personal knowledge of Scripture? This met with resistance from those who did not want change, who wanted to keep control over the people. Books considered seditious and heretical (as Martin Luther's were) were banned and burned. Our Martin Luther—seditious and heretical?

And we—who name ourselves after this radical—must continue to strive for what he strove for, including literacy for all. A person who cannot read must accept the conclusions of others. Only when a person can—and does—read is an individual conclusion possible. Thank you, Martin Luther!

Faith L. Fretheim is a program director for Women of the ELCA.

* From *Illiteracy: A National Dilemma*, by David Hartman. New York: Cambridge Book Company, 1987.

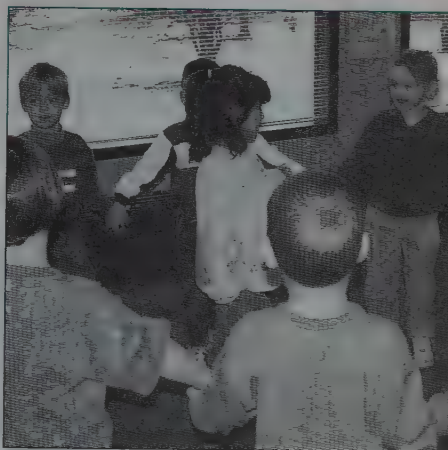
What **ELCA** Schools Offer

John J. Scibilia

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is committed to quality education for all children in the United States. A quarter of a million children attend more than 2000 Lutheran early-childhood centers, elementary, and secondary schools operated as ministries of ELCA congregations. These schools provide excellent developmental and academic programs, and they witness to our faith in Christ. Rural, suburban, and inner-city urban Lutheran schools serve their neighborhoods and constituency with integrity.

The mission of the ELCA in education is to integrate the Christian story into the learning environment, to advance excellence that embraces every field and level of learning, and to build community. The ELCA Department for Schools offers programs, leadership, support, advocacy, and counsel to early-childhood centers and schools to assist them in nurturing members of their communities for service to God, church, and the world.

Lutheran schools affirm the church's tradition and identity in lifting up teaching and learning as a calling from God. They also have helped ELCA congregations reach into neighborhoods that have become more diverse. The children and students enrolled in these



ELCA Early Childhood Center

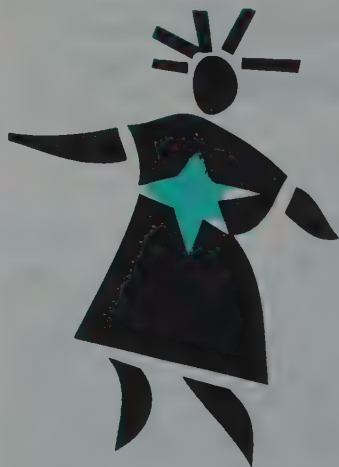
schools often are not Lutheran. It is not the intent of congregations to operate schools solely for members, but also as a way of reaching out and cooperatively joining hands with the community in efforts for quality education of the whole child. In Lutheran elementary and secondary schools, more than one-third of the students and one-quarter of the staff persons are African American, Hispanic, or Asian. Affordable tuition rates and genuine openness to the community continue and celebrate racial, cultural, and economic diversity within these schools. Financial assistance programs are also becoming more readily available, particularly for families at risk.

For more information about Lutheran schools, opening a Lutheran school, or providing support and assistance, contact the ELCA Department for Schools at (800) 638-3522, ext. 2857.

John J. Scibilia is the ELCA director for schools in the Division for Higher Education and Schools.

Why We Must Advocate for All Children

Melanie Bliss



September is the month I renew my New Year's resolutions to continue advocating for the needs of all children. The needs of children are growing in a time of increasing taxpayer opposition to fund schools adequately.

As people of faith, we must prepare children to live in an increasingly diverse society. We should foster a vision of the world where *all* children receive an education that permits them to participate fully and equally in society. We need to offer God's love to all children, not just our own children.

Increasingly, local school boards, state legislatures, and the U.S. Congress find taxpayers unwilling to consider tax increases to maintain quality in the classroom. I believe education and child-related programs must become top priorities legislatively, and governmental budgets must provide equitable funding for services that benefit all children. Because children do not vote or make political contributions, we as child advocates must mount campaigns on their behalf.

As concerned people of faith, we should build coalitions with groups that share our interest in lifting up education and children. This will require becoming active in the politi-

cal election process. Because of voter apathy, a tiny percentage of voters can influence an election. It is important that churches, PTAs, Leagues of Women Voters, and other educational groups sponsor candidate forums before elections are held. We need to ask tough questions, and hold candidates accountable to the needs of children.

The key to successful advocacy is to study the issues and get involved. Perhaps this will lead you—as it did me—to run for political office. Democracy in action at the local level is crucial to the ongoing viability of our schools and to the education of the citizens of the 21st century—our future.

Melanie Bliss is a full-time mother and community volunteer in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She has served on school boards in two states for more than 10 years.



Grace

A Place of Learning

Burton Everist

Our gracious Christ is always and everywhere teaching—but especially as congregations celebrate the Great Feast. We learn as we worship. This story is a witness to one congregation's learning of the work of God in our midst. It is not unique. May it help you recall your own congregation's life and learning.

If you worship at Grace you will be greeted by Sharon and Leonard Yoerger, our ushers. Each Sunday this faithful couple drives past the

place where Steve, one of their sons, died on Highway 35N—within eye-sight of the church. Still they come, and their warm and quiet ministry teaches us the victory of Christ in their lives. At almost the same spot, a drunken driver killed Bev Schmidt (then our council vice president), along with her husband. We learned to face our rage and grief. Many deepened their opposition against drinking and driving.

If you worshiped at Grace, you would pass "Lorena's pew," where one of our faithful elderly couples

This story is a witness to one congregation's learning of the work of God in our midst.

regularly sat. Lorena could hardly walk, but with real effort she would make it up to the altar to receive Christ's body and blood. And until she died, if she could get out at all, she would make it to church on Sunday.

Maleta is our altar guild chair-for-life. She attends church without fail, though she misses her husband, Randy. Until it became impossible for him to do so, Randy rode his electric cart up our steel access ramp. After a nasty fall in the midst of worship, Randy received communion in the pew. But still he came. We all learned.

The Sunday school children once gathered on the altar steps to lead a special opening of the service. They shared simple prayers of thanksgiving. Each child thanked God for one blessing...even professional football teams. Then they invited everyone to follow them, keeping one rule: no one may repeat another's word of thanks. Our 50-plus worshipers all complied, readily, without hesitation. (Who can resist the example and invitation of children?) Perhaps they had learned not to fear praying publicly because each Sunday the congregation offers prayers from the pew during the Prayer of the Church. These are usually petitions for others who are suffering sicknesses or facing challenges. Most are given by women, with a sprinkling offered by men.

During Lent you might have seen Laura, assistant Sunday school superintendent, along with one of the children, introducing Lenten symbols. Laura is learning to claim her leadership gifts and is stepping forward with her time and abilities.

Most Sundays our choir will sing. Aside from the council, its committees, and our Sunday school, the choir is our only continuing organization. For years they sang under Leah's direction. Leah not only played the organ but also invited person after person to worship Christ at Grace. The choir and congregation suffered with Leah through two years of her battle with cancer. On several Sundays the organ remained silent while we waited—letting Leah know we wanted her to return. Leah was gifted with a vision as she lay dying (talking and singing even in her last two days) when she saw a “beautiful lady, dressed in white, beckoning to me.” Under the gentle leadership of their new director, Kris, the choir worked through their grief. They stretched in new ways. Now the choir often learns different hymns from *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *With One Voice*. They support our singing. We learn as they learn.

The sermon often features an insight garnered from a members of the adult Bible class. We're currently learning from the Bible study, “Jesus: The Messiah Among Us,” in *Lutheran Woman Today*.

Each child thanked God for one blessing . . . then invited everyone to follow them, keeping one rule: no one may repeat another's word of thanks.

When the offerings are carried forward from the baptismal font, two children accompany the ushers. One bears the home-baked bread, lovingly prepared by church members. The other child may need help to carry the food-pantry basket. The bread is placed on the Lord's Table, the basket underneath it. Each Sunday we are reminded of the needs of others. We learn the true meaning of discerning the whole body of Christ.

Once a month Sr. Mary Owen Haggerty, our parish health minister and a Dominican sister, leads the Prayer of the Church. Members learn from her counsel and support before, during, and after hospitalization. Her presence holds before us our long-standing ecumenical covenant with our sister churches, St. Mary's Roman Catholic Parish, and Wesley United Methodist Church. Each Sunday our prayers include them along with the ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We remember how the ELCA supported our ministry as a mission congregation, and how it still provides strength through the Northern Illinois Synod and through churchwide resources.

Our prayers also remember some aspect of the ministry and daily life of our members, such as

those who care for the land. We learned this from a Christmas program obtained from the Lutheran Resource Center in Clear Lake, Iowa, which invited parents to bring forward and lay in the manger symbols of their daily work (hard hats, electronic switches, sales receipts, home-cleaning appliances, and more).

Children and adults approach the altar. Without fail, Sunday in and Sunday out, Christ's body and blood are offered "for the forgiveness of sins, for life, for salvation."

Frequently Gene will stand among us at the altar, aided by his cane, sometimes accompanied by his three children. He lives with multiple sclerosis and knows that each Sunday he will be named in our prayers. Gene learned from the faithfulness of Randy and Lorena and Andy. Now he is a living witness to others by his participation.

Jayne and her older son, Sheldon, will stand at the altar, too, leaving in the pew Cameron, who has muscular dystrophy. Sheldon brought the family back to Sunday school and to the Eucharist. The wine served at the altar was made by Gen and Joe from the church's own vineyard. The vineyard and a small apple orchard on the property are teaching us care of the

The wine served at the altar was made by Gen and Joe from the church's own vineyard. The vineyard is teaching us care of the earth and appreciation for God's abundance.

earth and appreciation for God's abundance.

You will not know that Bill and Jolene and their children now worship because Gernert and Bev had the courage to visit them. Nor can you know the learning in council meetings where members and pastor learn as they wrestle and sometimes wrangle over pressing issues: How can our church building be used by the community? How can we invite others to worship Christ with us? Why do we have to wait until Christmas to sing Christmas carols?

Also invisible to you are the members who take turns Saturday after Saturday cleaning, vacuuming, swabbing toilets, and taking out the trash. If you worship on "Grubby Sunday" you will notice many women, men, and children dressed for work on our grounds. Harvesting is the most fun! We have learned that God, our host, does not care how we are dressed. We have also learned that Mel makes a great loose-meat sandwich!

Once a year junior-high children and veteran members work side by side, smoothly and efficiently serving our annual Soup and Chili Supper (with Country Store). We have learned this allows some who have no paying jobs to contribute

financially to the work of the church. Last year Annette, a new confirmation student, learned the ropes from classmates Jason and Emily.

Together we have learned how the great blessing—"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace"—gathers all the gifts we have received in Christ. And it prepares us to be sent to our daily ministries as truck drivers, salespeople, teachers, learning-center aides, homemakers, retired citizens, custodians, and a host of other callings. We have been refreshed by Christ's body and blood and have learned anew to marvel at the steadfast love of God that we have witnessed in Christ's body, the church.

We know that throughout the world, gathered to be fed by Christ, other congregations are also learning, growing, and being sent to serve. Congregations like your own. Thanks be to our ever-teaching God! **C**

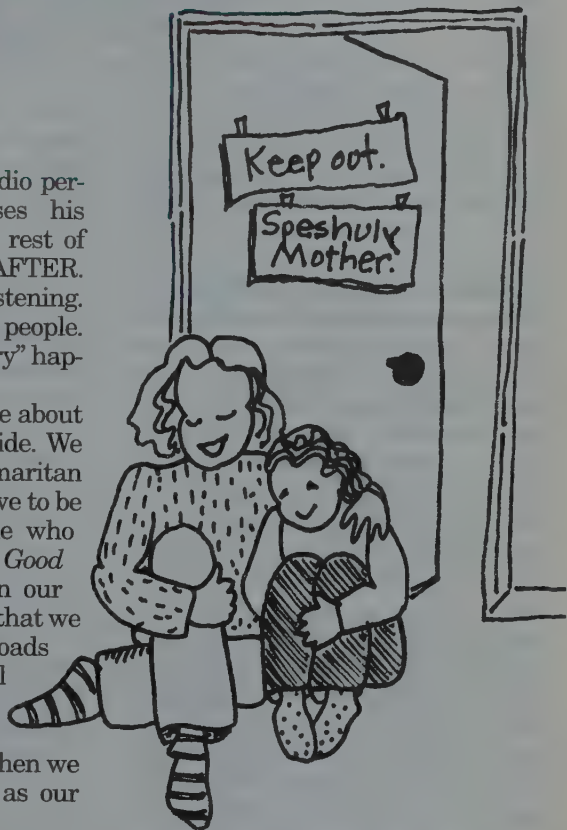
The Rev. Burton Everist is pastor of Grace Lutheran in East Dubuque, Illinois, and directs the Emmaus Center for Learning Education for the ELCA's three synods in Illinois.

The Rest of the Story

Marj Leegard

Paul Harvey is a radio personality who bases his monologue on “the rest of the story”—what happened AFTER. It makes for interesting listening. We are a rest-of-the-story people. What happens “after the story” happens in our lives.

We know well the parable about the man lying by the roadside. We understand that as the Samaritan was moved to help, so ought we to be like the Samaritan—the one who was forever after called the *Good Samaritan*. As we mature in our faith, we grow to understand that we must work to make the roads safe. Good Samaritans will act to make attacks on our neighbors less likely. And we will be the rest-of-the-story when we recognize society’s wounded as our neighbors.



The Prodigal Son

It is much more difficult to see ourselves after the story of the Prodigal Son. Had the story been told of a mother and her daughters, it might have caught our attention more. But mothers in biblical times did not have shares of property to give. They were not the owners of rings and robes and sandals and standing rib roasts.

Jesus told the story of a man with two sons. One son wanted his share of his father's wealth *now*! He felt he could do what he wished with his share, and what he wished for was cash. So he turned it into money for spending. And spend it he did—in a distant country, squandering his present and future, and forgetting his past.

Where once there was warmth, food, and shelter, now there was cold, hunger, and need. Money is like that—now it's here, now it's gone. So this wayward, broken son went to live with the pigs. Finally, he came to his senses and set off for his father's house. This is the "Hallelujah! Re-joice!" part of the story. The father gives the dirty, hungry, cold, frightened son an extravagant welcome. He not only welcomes him—he goes out to meet him. Jesus shows us what forgiveness is like. "He was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:31b, Revised English Bible).

The Prodigal Son, Part II

It seems to us that the rest of the story is "they lived happily ever after." So long as the story is about an earthly parent and child (each with dreams, plans, and desires), that one meeting is *never* the end of the story. It is not the end of the story when friends forgive each other and become friends again. It is not the end of the story when husbands and wives settle a disagreement and decide to stay. Peace agreements between nations and peoples must be forged today and renewed tomorrow. The supply of robes and sandals and fatted calves and beautiful rings needs to be plentiful. And always ready. The place in the road for the joyful meeting must be celebration-ready all the time. How else how can we pray to be forgiven as we forgive?

That joyful place in the road for my little daughter and me was the long hall that ended at her room. When she would retreat in tears, frustration, and anger, she would come out again to meet me in the hallway for hugs and talk. Except this once. She was quiet behind her

closed door. Then the knob turned. I went down the hall to meet her. Her little hand came out around the door with a piece of paper dangling strips of sticky tape. She fastened it to the outside of the door without appearing, and shut the door again. The sign said, "Keep Out."

I waited in the dining room until I heard the knob turn again. I started down the hall. The little hand came out with another sign and more tape. She fastened the new sign crookedly beside the other. Her hand retreated. The sign said, "Speshuly Mother."

A few minutes later we met in the hall. It was "speshuly" wonderful, because we were both aware of the depths of our disagreement and the depth of love that brought us to each other's arms.

Parents and children meet each other in the hallways of family life. Friends sometimes meet each other at work or in shared neighborhoods. Husbands and wives may meet each other again in the awareness of shared love for their children. Nations and ethnic groups meet each other at borders, shared dreams of homelands, and shared cities. For all of us there is a meeting place in the road. God, who welcomes the penitent wayward, puts into our hearts the ability to carry out the rest of the story as many times as we need to be welcomed back from our exile. As many times as we go with open arms to welcome back each other. C

LWT columnist Marj Leegard is from Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Questions, Anyone?

Terence E. Fretheim

The Chicago Tribune recently reported a sharp increase in Bible sales across the country. The reasons for this are disputed. But people, both within the church and without, seem to have increasing numbers of questions about the Bible. Perhaps now, more than at any recent time, people are less hesitant to ask questions about the Bible. Exploring these questions together is a wonderful opportunity to witness to the faith.

Suppose a friend asks you, "What is the Bible, anyway?" How would you respond?

You might say, simply, "The Bible is the Word of God."

Good! That's a fine beginning. But, what if your friend presses you with other questions, like these:

▲ Why do Roman Catholics have more books in their Bible than you do?

▲ Why do Jews have a Bible with the same books as our Old Testament, but in a different order?

If you love Scripture but don't know as much as you'd like about the Bible, then **"About the Bible"**—a new monthly LWT column, premiering on these pages—is for you.

If you are an explorer willing to "join the conversation"—with the author and with other readers—over questions about the Bible, then this column is for you.

If you want your "Bible literacy" to match your "Bible piety," then this column is for you.

If you're willing to consider that not all questions have answers but are still very much worth exploring, then this column is for you.

Bible scholar Terence Fretheim will be our guide as he writes each "About the Bible" column. And you can be part of the series. Read on to see how—ED.

▲ Can more books be added to the Bible?

▲ Did Jesus have a Bible? Did the authors of the New Testament books have a Bible?

▲ In what language(s) was the Bible written?

▲ What translation of the Bible do you use? Why? Why are various translations of the Bible often different from one another? Are some translations better than others?

▲ When was the Bible written?

▲ Who wrote the Bible?

▲ What types of literature are there in the Bible?

▲ Did everything reported in the Bible actually happen? Is everything in the Bible to be taken, or interpreted, literally?

▲ When you say the Bible is true, what do you mean? Are there differences of fact or opinion within the Bible?

▲ What do you mean when you say that the Bible is "inspired"? Just how does God speak to people?

▲ What do you mean when you say that the Bible has "authority"? Does the New Testament have more authority for Christians than the Old Testament?

▲ Does everything in the Bible apply to Christian faith and life today? Is everything in the Bible equally important for Christians today?

▲ What role should the Bible play in our everyday lives? How should we use the Bible to explore today's issues?

▲ How do personal life experiences affect how you read and interpret the Bible?

▲ Why do Christians often interpret the Bible differently? How should we best talk about our differences?

▲ Are there religious matters that the Bible does not talk about—and questions that the Bible doesn't answer?

▲ Can Bible texts have more than one meaning?

▲ What are some good helps or tools for studying the Bible?

Over the next months "About the Bible" will look at questions like these and at questions readers suggest for the column (see page 37). Perhaps women's circles, adult forums, or other small groups will want to use the column to kick off "About the Bible" discussions. Make it work for you as the Spirit guides you.

Learning— A Powerful Witness

All too often for Christians, Bible piety is not matched by Bible literacy. That is, we revere the Bible highly, but we often don't really know very much about it. As Christians who hold the Bible in high esteem, we will want to learn as much about it as we can. We will want to ask our questions freely. And we will want to be able to talk helpfully to people who ask their own questions about the Bible. Our response may be an important witness to them.

Think about it: If we are not able to say very much about the Bible, others may wonder why we hold it so dear. It may even seem, in some odd way, that we are embarrassed by the Bible! Learning more about the

Bible can help us to interpret it in more mature ways. It can help us come to informed and stimulating conclusions about the meaning of many things in the Bible. And it will enable us to witness more thoughtfully and powerfully to the faith we confess.

It's important to remember that there are not always concrete answers to questions about the Bible. But, even without definitive answers, questions are sometimes the most helpful avenues to insight. To live with questions over time is important because they keep us thinking about matters that are key for our faith and life. Even more, living with questions will mean we can better recognize answers if and when they come our way. **G**

The Rev. Terence E. Fretheim is Elva Lovell professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul,



Minnesota. Dr. Fretheim is author of The Suffering of God (Augsburg Fortress) and commentaries on Exodus Westminster / John Knox) and Genesis (New Interpreter's Bible, Abingdon).

Join the Conversation

So, join the conversation with us. What are your questions about the Bible? Share them with LWT for possible use in a future "About the Bible" column.

We are looking for general questions about the Bible (such as those listed on pp. 35-36), not specific questions about specific texts (such as "What is the meaning of John 3:16?").

Send your question(s) to: LWT Bible Series, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189.

Letters should be postmarked by November 1, 1996.

My question about the Bible:

Optional:

Name:

Address:

Jesus: The Messiah Among Us

Carolyn Keller



Session 9: The Teacher Study Text: Matthew 5:17-20; 22:34-40

Memory Verse

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17).

Overview

From the perspective of the religious leaders, Jesus seemed to break God's law often. Yet Jesus himself said that he came not to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them. In this session, we will look at Jesus as a teacher of the law who embodied its very essence. Jesus perfectly loved God and his neighbor as himself. Through Jesus, we are given righteousness we cannot attain on our own. Only through him can love replace self-righteous virtue.

Opening

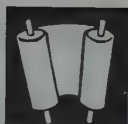
Pray together the following prayer:

Lord, we thank you that you have taught us what you would have us believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to keep your Word in pure hearts, that thereby we may be strengthened in faith, perfected in holiness, and comforted in life and in death. Amen. (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 137).

Lawbreaker or Model of Righteousness?

As we have seen in previous sessions, Jesus offended the religious leaders by eating with tax collectors and sinners (see the Bible study in the July-August issue of LWT) and healing on the Sabbath (June Bible study). The Pharisees honored God by separating themselves from sinners who did not follow the law. Likewise, the Sabbath was a day of rest, and as the Pharisees

understood God's law, no work, including healing, was to be done. We might expect from these encounters that Jesus simply had a more relaxed interpretation of the law. Yet Matthew's Gospel shows Jesus' concern for every detail.



1. **Read Matthew 5:17-20.** In verse 18, how does Jesus emphasize the importance of every aspect of the law? What does Jesus say will happen to anyone breaking even a small commandment (verse 19)?

In Matthew 5:20, Jesus criticized the Pharisees for not being righteous enough. To us, this verse is not surprising. We tend to think of the term *pharisee* as another word for *hypocrite*. In Jesus' day, however, suggesting that the Pharisees were not righteous enough was a radical statement.

After all, the Pharisees honored God by mastering hundreds of commandments and following each with discipline and uncompromising exactness. Every aspect of life was an occasion for observing God's law—even ordinary actions like picking up a common nail or buying wheat came under scrutiny. Doing God's will was the whole focus of life.¹

In Matthew's Gospel, we glimpse the authority and respect given to the Pharisees when Jesus says, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it" (23:2-3). The Pharisees *were* careful.

Yet Jesus also went on to advise his followers not to do as Pharisees do, because they don't practice what they preach (Matthew 23:3). From Jesus' perspective, even the best human models of righteousness did not meet the standards of heaven. Matthew 5 ends with Jesus saying, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (verse 48). Jesus' ministry and teaching was dedicated to demonstrating this kind of heavenly righteousness.

2. Do you think Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees in Matthew 5:20 was simply harsh rejection, or was there something hidden in the severity of his words? Explain.

¹. (Jacob Neusner, *The Pharisees: Rabbinic Perspectives*, Hoboken, N.J.: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1973).



The Essence of the Law

Later in Matthew, one of the Pharisees tested Jesus by asking him to identify the greatest commandment.

- 3. Read Matthew 22:34-40.** If a person obeyed Jesus' summary of the law, would he or she be keeping all the Ten Commandments? Explain. You might want to refer to Exodus 20:1-18.

Jesus' summary of the law was nothing new. The greatest commandment was taken from Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

- 4. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.** Speaking for God, how did Moses instruct the people of Israel to remember these words? Look especially at the action words used.

The second greatest commandment came from Leviticus 19:18, where the Lord said through Moses, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."

- 5.** In Matthew 22:39, why do you think Jesus said this second summary commandment was like the first? How are the two commandments woven together?

Loving God and the Neighbor

All that Jesus said and did was an illustration of what it means to love God and the neighbor. Jesus viewed sinners with compassion, like sick people in need of a physician (Matthew 9:10-13). Therefore, he responded to them.

When Jesus saw the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, he did not wait until the next day to heal him. He told the Pharisees that if one of them had only one sheep that fell into a hole on the Sabbath, it would be rescued before the next day. Then he pointed out how much more valuable the man with the withered hand was than a sheep (Matthew 12:9-14). Jesus spoke from the law so that the Pharisees could understand. He called them to witness the compassion of God. Jesus opposed

the Pharisees in order to teach "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23).

Jesus obeyed the commands to love God and the neighbor by being obedient to God all the way to the cross. As he prayed in Gethsemane before his arrest, he submitted his will to God: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want" (Matthew 26:39). In his last meal with the disciples, he indicated that his death would have a saving purpose, that his blood would be "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Jesus' resurrection was a confirmation that his love for God and others was not misguided or in vain.



6. Choose a moment from Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection that best conveys his love to you. Which words or actions stand out? Why?

Jesus, Our Teacher

In loving us, Jesus teaches us to love.

7. Think about the word *teacher* by recalling a special teacher in your life. What made that person an excellent teacher? Note a few words or phrases, or a particular incident to summarize your teacher's impact on your life.

In some respects, Jesus could be compared to other excellent teachers we have known. Yet Jesus is unique, with power and authority like no other person.

8. Which of the words you used to describe your special teacher could also be applied to Jesus? How is Jesus a unique teacher?

When Jesus described the Pharisees, he said, "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4). The Pharisees were experts at teaching hundreds of commandments. This was an over-



whelming obligation for people. In contrast, Jesus said simply: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

In our day, we are not generally burdened by religious laws. But we do have our "experts," who weigh us down with advice. Bookstores have shelves of self-help books. The media can overwhelm us with good advice on marriage, parenting, exercise, healthy eating habits, successful careers, financial planning, home improvements, and more. We can be exhausted by the knowledge of all we should be doing.

9. How do you balance Jesus' promise to carry our burdens (Matthew 11:28) with our need as people to grow spiritually and emotionally? What is it about Jesus that lightens our load?

Our Call to Love God and Others

Jesus taught us that Christian loving is a response to love first given. Jesus knew God's love for him was deep and faithful. Jesus loves us with the same passion. In turn, when we love God and others as a response to God's love for us, we are doing what we were created to do. We experience what it truly means to be human.

10. Recall a time you felt fully alive because you felt you were completely caught up in loving God or another person. Write or offer aloud a few sentences to describe your experience. How was your experience a gift?

Looking Ahead

Session 10, "The Rebel," continues to explore Jesus' differences with the religious leaders of his day, and also considers the church's constant need for reformation. In preparation for that session, **read Luke 5:17—6:11** and memorize the following verse: "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the one who was paralyzed—"I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home" (Luke 5:24). **GCA**

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1997 Coming Up in Lutheran Woman Today

EXODUS: INTRODUCING THE 1997 BIBLE STUDY January 1997

About *From Slavery to Service: A Study of Exodus*; Why do Bible study? Old Testament ties for New Testament lives.

Bible study session: "The Birth of Israel: Slavery in Egypt" (Exodus 1:1-14).

WADE IN THE WATER February 1997

Lenten meditations; Water images; Here I stand; Songs, hymns, and spirituals.

Bible study session: "Preparing the Way: The Women Who Save Moses" (Exodus 1:15—2:10).

Reader Call: "She Took a Stand" (due October 1, 1996). Tell a modern-day story of a woman of faith and courage.

A COMPANY OF STRANGERS March 1997

Do I belong? Missionary women; Love, care, and hospitality; Redemptive violence?

Bible study session: "Moses as Wanderer: Search for Identity" (Exodus 2:11-25).

Reader Call: "When I Was a Stranger..." (due November 1, 1996).

WHO, ME? April 1997

God calling; *Tetragrammaton*; On being a church leader; What's in a name? An Easter people.

Bible study session: "The Call of Moses: Mission in the Name of the Lord" (Exodus 3:1—4:31).

Reader Call: "How I Celebrate Easter" (due December 1, 1996).

GOD SAVES May 1997

A Pentecost people; Hardening of the heart; Let my people go; Salvation.

Bible study session: "The Plagues: God's Battle with Pharaoh" (Exodus 5:1—10:29).

Reader Call: "How I Will Celebrate Pentecost" (due January 2, 1997).

**MEMORY AND
HOPE**
June 1997

Ministry in daily life; Liturgy literacy; The Seder; Sharing stories, sharing meals.

Bible study session: "Passover: Celebration in the Midst of Sorrow" (Exodus 11–12).

Reader Call: "Remembering a Funeral" (due February 1, 1997). How did a funeral service help or hurt you?

**PROCLAIM GOD'S
PEACE**
July-August 1997

The violent stories; Flood prayer; Miriam's song. Peace and justice.

Bible study session: "The Red Sea: Singing the Song of Victory" (Exodus 13:17–15:21).

Reader Call: "My Favorite Hymn—and Why" (due March 1, 1997).

**MANNA AND
MURMURING**
September 1997

Church whines; Sufficiency; Putting God to the test. Coffee-hour evangelism; Laments.

Bible study session: "Wandering in the Wilderness: Bread and Water" (Exodus 15:22–18:27).

FREED FOR...
October 1997

What are we freed for? From purity to compassion. Mountains; Covenants.

Bible study session: "Coming to Sinai: Commitment to the Lord Who Saves" (Exodus 19:1–20:21).

**THANKS BE
TO GOD**
November 1997

A mobile God; Graven images; All saints...not. Who, me—a follower?

Bible study session: "The Law and the Golden Calf: We Are Yet Sinners" (Exodus 20:22–32:35).

Reader Call: "Today's Golden Calf" (due July 1, 1997). Where do you see idolatry today?

GOD WITH US
December 1997

A Christmas people; Jesus and Moses; Abounding in steadfast love; God revealed.

Bible study session: "Conclusions: The Lord Is Gracious and Merciful" (Exodus 33:1–34:35).

Reader Call: "How I Will Celebrate Christmas" (due August 1, 1997).

READER CALLS

Lutheran Woman Today invites you to respond to "Reader Calls" (see pp. 43-44). The due dates are listed after each topic. Please submit pieces up to 350 words, typed (or printed) and double-spaced, to:

LWT Reader Call
8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4189

Since there are a number of reader calls scheduled for 1997, please note the issue and topic of the reader call on the envelope. For example: "February Reader Call: She Took a Stand." At the top of your essay, note the issue and topic of the reader call, your name, address, and telephone number (with area code).

Once submitted, reader call essays may be used in a number of ways: a paragraph or two may be excerpted and included in a larger article, the entire essay may be reproduced in full, or the essay may be shaped into a new article. How the essay is used depends on the number and kind of responses to a given reader call. If your essay is accepted for publication, we will send you an edited copy of the essay before it is published.

By submitting an article, you give us your permission to use all or part of your essay in Lutheran Woman Today and to allow others to reproduce the article in which your essay appears. All other rights to the essay remain yours. As our thank-you, we will give each essayist who is published in LWT a one-year subscription to the magazine (to keep or give as a gift).

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**ABOUT THE
BIBLE STUDY
IN LWT**

Each year, Lutheran Woman Today carries and supports the Women of the ELCA Bible study. In 1997, the Bible study is titled "From Slavery to Service: A Study of Exodus." Stories from the book of Exodus have been favorites for generations. Readers familiar with Exodus, as well as those exploring it for the first time, have learned from it and grown in their faith. These stories are no less valuable in our day. How do we understand God to be at work in us and through us? What does it mean to "be saved" in a world like ours? How can we address oppressive powers and people? Join the conversation—renew your faith through Bible study! This 11-session Bible study is appropriate for group or individual use, and is only found in the 1997 issues of LWT.

**COMPANION
RESOURCES**

Resources are available to enhance and enrich the study of "From Slavery to Service: A Study of Exodus," including:

- **Bible Study Resource Book and Audiocassette**, a valuable learning tool containing insights to help you better understand "From Slavery to Service." Complementing the LWT study, this resource digs even deeper, exploring various issues of today in light of the book of Exodus. A 45-minute audiocassette for personal or group use is included with the resource book. Code: LT2-9725, \$5.50.

- **Leader Guide**, expanded to include the entire Bible Study Resource Book and Audiocassette. Leader tips, background information, helps for answering questions, and activities make leading a Bible study group easy. Code: LT2-9726, \$9.50.

- **Informational Video**, featuring "From Slavery to Service" author Diane Jacobson. This 15-minute video offers an excellent introduction to this new Bible study. Included is a special coupon for two free Bible Study Resource Books with the purchase of five or more resource books. Code: LT2-9724, \$9.95.

- **NEW! Exodus Companion Bible**. This handy edition of the book of Exodus includes the text of Exodus, along with other biblical texts that are cross-referenced in the Bible study. Easy-to-carry size and easy-to-read type for studying on the go. Code: LT2-9750, \$2.95.

To order these resources and learn about others related to "From Slavery to Service: A Study of Exodus," call 1-800-328-4648, or fax (612) 330-3455.

Valuing Teachers

As far back as I can remember, I wanted to be a teacher. Other little girls might play house with their dolls. I sat mine down in a row and held school.

The dream came true when I started teaching at Wittenberg University. Only then did I learn what a difficult job teaching is.

Teaching is one of the great callings. The commitment to teaching is a promise to do many things. It is a promise to keep learning, to read and study and stay current in one's field. It means hours in the library on weekends or summer days. When I was in high school I had a class at the local teachers' college. There I saw the words above the entrance: "Who dares to teach must never cease to learn."

Teaching requires a commitment to the personal development of each student. It means being available whatever the time or the problem. It means having—or making—time to talk, to advise, to help, to be there.

Teaching takes many forms. Teaching does not require a classroom: I did some of my best teaching as a housemother in a college dormitory. Those late-night talk sessions covered a wide range of life and experience.

Teaching requires a willingness to take responsibility—for subject

matter, for presenting it honestly, for being fair to the students, for the integrity of what happens in your classroom.

We don't value the teachers in our schools highly enough. We give them our children for hours every day, and too often we don't ask enough questions or offer to help. We pay our teachers less than we pay people in jobs that require less education, less time, less commitment, less love.

I was lucky. I had wonderful teachers who cared about me and my fellow students, who had high standards for learning and behavior, who challenged me with new opportunities and allowed me the freedom to grow, to ask questions, to dare. I remember so many of them: Miss Paulmenn, Mrs. Manship, Miss Crane, Miss Westfall, and others. In college I had teachers who forced me to grow intellectually and consider my responsibilities to a wider world.

September is a good time to think about teaching, and all we owe to teachers. Any time is a good time to support teachers and let them know we understand how difficult a task they have, to honor them and offer to help.

*Charlotte E. Fiechter
Executive Director
Women of the ELCA*

First Fruits, Leftovers, and Prized Possessions

My mother-in-law, Grandma Bilow, could do wonders with leftovers. She would make the most scrumptious vegetable soup from Sunday's leftovers. During my first pregnancy (many years ago!), my biggest craving was for her piping hot, seasoned-just-right, yummy vegetable soup. My mouth still waters just thinking about it!

Grandma Hoffman (my mom's mom) spent many of her 89 years making beautiful quilts from scrap pieces of material. How many have slept under the warmth of those quilts?

Strange how the years have rolled by and now *I'm* Grandma Bilow. And my granddaughter, Ashley Bilow, is hoping I will bequeath her Grandma Hoffman's butterfly quilt. Leftovers turn into heirlooms and prized possessions.

Scripture is filled with verses about first fruits, tithes, and prized possessions. Thinking about that vegetable soup, I guess Grandma Bilow made it from the 10 percent of the food that remained from Sunday's dinner. She took the 10 percent in leftovers and multiplied it to make wonderful vegetable soup—enough to feed nine people several more meals.

This is what God does for us when we tithe—not just our annual incomes, but our estates as well. Even leftovers can be multiplied!

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this...and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10, New International Version). How about that for excitement?

During my time with Women of the ELCA, I have had the privilege of traveling throughout the country helping people define their "prized possessions," if and how they might be used more fully, and to whom they may, ultimately, want them to go. Once this is done, the big question is "how?"

It takes planning! That's what planned giving is all about—a way to increase benefits.

In future months this column—"Giving our lives joyfully"—will focus on how, with planning, real people are offering their "first fruits, leftovers, and prized possessions" to the glory of God and for blessing God's people.

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To schedule a planned giving workshop with Pat Bilow for your cluster or conference, call (800) 638-3522, ext. 2726, or (419) 592-2902.